

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

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P R 191115 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7991

INFO COMUSFORAZ LAJES

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, PO

SUBJ: CIVAIR - PANAM REQUEST FOR SERVICES AT LAJES

REF: (A) LISBON 1787 (B) STATE 30277

1. SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS COMMENTS ON AND RECOMMENDED ACTION RE FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTE OF MAY 15 (REF A). END SUMMARY

2. FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTE CONTAINED THREE POINTS: (A) LAJES FACILITIES INADEQUATE HANDLE ADDITIONAL COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC; (B) GOP DOUBTS TAP USE OF LAJES HAS DIVERTED TRAFFIC FROM OTHER CARRIERS AND (C) GOP AND NOT TAP RESPONSIBLE FOR TAP PRESENCE AT LAJES.

3. POINT A-- INADEQUACY LAJES FACILITIES-- DOES NOT STAND UP IN LIGHT OF FOLLOWING:

A. US MILITARY AUTHORITIES AT LAJES FIELD ADVISE THAT FACILITIES FOR LANDING, PARKING, AND REFUELING CAPABLE OF HANDLING CONSIDERABLY MORE AIRCRAFT THAN PRESENT FREQUENCY OF TEN TO FIFTEEN PER DAY.

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B. ONLY FACILITIES APPLICABLE TO COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS WHICH EVEN CLOSE TO BEING OVER- TAXED ARE TERMINAL FACILITIES FOR PASSENGER SERVICING, BAGGAGE HANDLING, SPACE FOR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES. SPACE IN TERMINAL, HOWEVER, AVAILABLE TO CIVILIAN AIRLINES FOR THESE ACTIVITIES HAS RECENTLY BEEN INCREASED BY WITHDRAWAL OF US MILITARY FROM ONE- THIRD OF SPACE ALLOTTED THEM AND WILL BE FURTHER ENLARGED BY MID- JULY WHEN ALL US MILITARY USE OF PRESENT PASSENGER FACILITIES IN TERMINAL IS SCHEDULED FOR TERMINATION.

C. FACT THAT EXISTING FACILITIES ALREADY ABLE HANDLE INCREASE PER FLIGHT OVER PRESENT TRAFFIC IS DEMONSTRATED BY FACT TAP HAS REQUESTED COMUSFORAZ ASSISTANCE FOR HANDLING TAP BOEING 747 AT LAJES ON MAY 22.

D. PRESSURES ON EXISTING TERMINAL FACILITIES WOULD NOT BE INCREASED IF US CIVILIAN CARRIER FLIGHTS WERE SCHEDULED FOR DAYS OR HOURS DIFFERENT FROM TAP FLIGHTS (WHICH WE ASSUME US CARRIERS COULD AGREE TO). IN FACT PRESSURE FROM EACH FLIGHT WOULD BE REDUCED IF ADDITIONAL FLIGHTS WERE AVAILABLE FOR TRAVELERS TO CHOOSE FROM.

4. RE POINT B-- TRAFFIC DIVERSION FROM SANTA MARIA-- COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGE TO CARRIERS USING SANTA MARIA BUT DENIED LAJES UNQUESTIONABLE. ASIDE FROM OBVIOUSLY MORE CENTRAL GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF LAJES, DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS CONCLUSIVE: SANTA MARIA HAS POPULATION OF SOME 5,000, TERCEIRA SOME 70,000. WHILE INTER- ISLAND SERVICE AVAILABLE FROM SATA AIRLINE (IN WHICH TAP FOR SOME MONTHS HAD HAD CONTROLLING INTEREST), SANTA MARIA- LAJES FARE IS HIGH (US\$25.75) AND IS CLEAR DISINCENTIVE TO SEEK AIRLINE SERVICE FROM SANTA MARIA RATHER THAN WAIT FOR SERVICE AT LAJES. ROUND TRIP IS TWICE THE ABOVE FIGURE. FURTHERMORE, PANAM REP LISBON ASSURES US HIS AIRLINE HAS LOST CONSIDERABLE TRAFFIC SINCE TAP SERVICE AT LAJES INAUGURATED. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, BE USEFUL HAVE FIGURES RATHER ASSERTION ABOUT DIVERSION IF DEPARTMENT, PER REF B, HAS BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP THEM.

5. NOTE' S THIRD POINT-- THAT GOP AND NOT TAP RESPONSIBLE FOR LATTER' S PRESENCE IN LAJES-- HAS NO RELEVANCE TO US RIGHTS IN THE AZORES UNDER THE BILATERAL.

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6. RECOMMENDED ACTION: WE RECOMMEND QUICK REPLY TO GOP THAT WOULD, USING INFO IN PARAS 3 AND 4 ABOVE AND ANY OTHER ARGUMENTS DEPARTMENT CAN MARSHAL, REFUTE ARGUMENTS MADE BY PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES IN LATEST NOTE. AS FOR RESPONSE TO GOP REQUEST FOR CONSULTATIONS, WE DEFER TO DEPARTMENT' S JUDGMENT, ALTHOUGH IN OUR VIEW THE CASE AT HAND DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE

COVERED BY ARTICLE 9 OF THE CIVIL BILATERAL. WHETHER OR NOT DEPARTMENT DOES AGREE TO CONSULTATIONS, TIME IS PROPITIOUS FOR (A) REMINDING GOP IN OUR NOTE THAT THEIR FAILURE TO TAKE ACTION IS PROLONGING INJURY TO PAN AM AND (B) SPELLING OUT MORE CONCRETELY COUNTERACTION USG HAS IN MIND; I. E., DISAPPROVING ACCESS TO US FOR THOSE TAP FLIGHTS THAT PASS THROUGH LAJES. IN ABSENCE OF ACTUAL COUNTERACTION OF STRONG STATEMENT OF INTENT TO COUNTERACT, GOP LIKELY CONTINUE TO STRING MATTER OUT INASMUCH AS DELAY TO THEIR ADVANTAGE.

7. FYI: INFORMATION CONTAINED IN PARAS 3 AND 4 ABOVE OBTAINED BY CHARGE D' AFFAIRES, WHO FOR OTHER REASONS VISITED LAJES ON DAY AFTER NOTE RECEIVED FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY. IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO NOTE IN OUR REPLY TO GOP THAT THIS INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED FIRST HAND. END FYI

8. ALL MESSAGES THIS SUBJECT SHOULD BE INFO COMUSFORAZ LAJES. POST

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